

FROM THE SHORES OF SICILY *to* THE RAMPARTS OF ORTONA — JOY *to* TEARS

By the time they had reached the outskirts of the stronghold town of Ortona, young Farley Mowat was no longer young in the ways of war – the depths to which man's inhumanity could plunge – the grip that fear could take on one's soul. Called on once again to lead a dangerous patrol, he recalls:

Four months earlier I would have welcomed the chance to make a patrol like this. Two months past I would have accepted it as a risky job that had to be done. But on this December day I would have given everything I was, or ever hoped to be, for a way out. There was none.

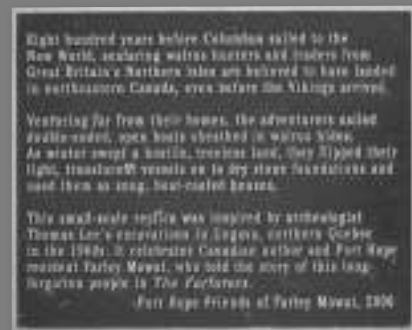
War does make heroes. One, as Mowat tells it, was Major Alex Campbell whose presence shines throughout. But he too was no stranger to the Worm called fear. The day before he lost his life in one last act of courage, Campbell passed on this poem to his friend.

When neath the rumble of the guns
I lead my men against the Huns,
I am alone, and weak, and scared
And wonder how I ever dared
Accept the task of leading them.
I wonder, worry, then I pray:
Oh God, who takes men's pain away,
Now, in my spirit's fight with fear,
Draw near, dear God, draw near, draw near!
Make me more willing to obey,
Help me to merit my command,
And if this be my fatal day,
Reach out, Oh God, they helping hand.
These men of mine must never know
How much afraid I really am!
Help me to stand against the foe,
So they will say: He was a man!

Quotations from: And No Birds Sang, Farley Mowat, Key Porter Books, 2003



Farley Mowat at the Dry Stone Wall Festival 2006



FARLEY MOWAT - PASSIONATE CANADIAN: 1921-2014



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